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WHAT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING?

A Series of Eight Friday Evening Discourses
Delivered before
CONGREGATION
BETH ISRAEL
PHILADELPHIA, PA.
During the Winter 5664 ('03-'04)
BY RABBI M. M. EICHLER

Published by the Beth Israel Culture Association

1904
BLOCH PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

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THE B. I. C. A. PUBLICATION COMMITTEE.

ARTHUR COHEN, *Chairman*,
2355 N. Van Pelt Street, Philadelphia.

PAULINE SCHWERIN, FELIX BACK.

WALTHER PRINT, S. E. Cor. Third St. and Girard Ave.
PHILADELPHIA.

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IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

TEXT:—"Therefore I hated life; because I felt displeased with the work that is wrought under the sun; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit." —(Ecclesiastes II, 17.)

"Is life worth living?"—is the question that rises in the minds of thinking men and women at serious moments. To the thoughtless and frivolous the question will never occur. To those who never knew any sorrow and whose path was never crossed by some calamity this query will have but little significance. But those who tasted the bitterness of life and walked in the darkness of adversity have often asked themselves "What is it all for? Does life contain sufficient good to compensate for the multitude of evil it harbors? Is its prize precious enough to justify the infinite toil it demands? Is its reward rich enough to pay for the unceasing struggle, the never ending anguish, the eternal vexation of spirit?" These are questions that involuntarily come forth from a breast overflowing with grief. Man stands at the grave of a beloved one whose existence was a source of perennial sunshine to him. While the friend is laid in the cold earth he feels that his soul too has become empty and cold and that life for him has become aimless. Can we blame him when in that dark hour he expresses the doubt, whether to him, life is worth living? Or, may be, a great disappointment deprived him of the zest for life; a long cherished hope in which the toil and endeavor of years were centred has, in one moment, vanished like smoke; an ambition nursed tenderly through weary years of privation and suffering has been at the verge of realization, and in one sad hour its fulfillment was for ever made impossible. It is natural that in such sad moments men should exclaim with Koheleth "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

But there are other occasions when we are tempted to doubt the use of life. We look around in the world and behold an abundance of injustice and evil. Truth is crushed to earth, while falsehood struts along triumphantly. The powers of evil and corruption hold sway over the human heart and over human society. All efforts to exalt and purify the race meet with re-

buffs. Progress in the moral and religious realms is slow and hardly perceptible. Seeing all this we become disheartened and we ask again "Is life worth living?" Is it worth while to strive for justice and righteousness, when the goal remains for ever distant and unapproachable?

We witness the closing scene of a great and successful career. We see how honor, wealth, wisdom and power culminate in a little hillock of dust. Before nature had a chance of benevolently covering the grave with green sod its tenant has been forgotten. Of what use are to him glory, knowledge, fame, triumphs, success? Was life even at its best worth living? With Shakespeare we are apt to say:

> "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot,
> Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."—(Macbeth.)

"Is life worth living?"—The question has been asked at various epochs of mankind's history and answered both in the affirmative and in the negative. "No"—says the pessimist,—"Life is a failure," and putting on sackcloth, with Job, he curses the day on which he saw the light, and says with Koheleth: "I hated life because I felt displeased with the work that is wrought under the sun, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

"Is life worth living?"—"Yes," replies the Epicurean, but only to gratify the sensual appetites, for there is no nobler purpose of human existence than to enjoy the pleasures that the fleeting moment deposits in our lap. Thus making his motto "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we shall die," he lives as if the world were a huge farce.

"Is life worth living?" "Hardly," answers the Ascetic,—"Life is a bundle of errors." Lest he be contaminated by its impurities he withdraws into the lonely forest and lives in the cave a crippled and stunted existence.

But turning away from the pessimist, the grief-stricken, the epicurean and the ascetic, we anxiously inquire again, "Is life worth living?" Faith, revelation, reason and experience all unite in giving us this reply: Life *is* worth living if you make it so. You can live so as to render your life a burden to yourself and a curse to others,—and then it is *not* worth living; or you can mould it into a beautiful form, a source of joy to yourself and of blessing to others,—and then indeed, it *is* worth

living. The value of life depends upon its aims and ideals. It is not determined by the success or failure that comes from without, but by the purposes and motives that are within. Millions have lived and died whose existence was as useless and aimless as the chaff that is driven by the wind and who left no more trace behind them than the pebble cast into the water. Countless are those who to-day exist in human society whose life is empty, vain and wasted because they fail to grasp its meaning and its true significance. A life of selfishness is not worth living. A life centred in itself is like a tree that bears no fruit, a useless and profitless thing. Says a writer, "The man who is not conscious of an obligation to leave something better in the world at his death than was to be found there at his birth does not understand the highest purpose of life."

A life of avarice is not worth living; money-getting is all very well and no one can depreciate the value of money as a means of getting on in the world and of doing good. But when money-getting becomes an end, when it becomes the central object and aim of existence; when in its pursuit the higher things are neglected and the soul is dwarfed, then it is the worst of vices and the root of all evil. A life spent in accumulating worldly treasures for their own sake is ill-spent and wasted and of use to no one,—not even to the unfortunate slave of Mammon himself.

A life devoted to pleasure is not worth living. Not only is such life extremely narrow and selfish, but it also defeats its own ends and brings neither contentment nor happiness. The man who lives for his appetites is far from being happy, nay, he is a slave to his passions, which rule him and eventually bring him to destruction.

A life of ignorance is not worth living. It is not supposed that everybody should have diplomas from colleges and universities. These are not absolutely necessary, and a man can be useful without knowing many languages and the arts and the sciences. But to go through life without intellectual and spiritual self-improvement, is throwing away the most precious pearls and being content with picking up the empty shells.

A life of irreligion and sin is not worth living. I care not how learned and accomplished, how successful and well-to-do a man is, if he lives in rebellion against the will of God and shuts out religion and virtue from his heart, his life is wasted—a failure of failures. It would be better for him not to have been

born than to live a Godless life, without that element which sanctifies, elevates and ennobles existence, and without which man is on a level with the brute.

This, then, my friends, is my message to you to-night. Life is a precious boon which is given to man in order that he improve it, elevate it, and make it "a thing of beauty and joy forever." I wish you to be impressed with the truth that life is neither a comedy nor a tragedy; that it is neither a banqueting hall nor a dungeon; that it is rather a field where the industrious can sow precious seeds and reap golden harvests and where the indolent stand idle and lament because of the thistles that spring up about them. I believe that life is a blessing, a joy, a delight, to those who understand how to live and have the moral courage to walk in the direction whither wisdom points. I believe that this world is not a valley of tears to those who endeavor to lift themselves from the low level of selfishness, avarice, self-indulgence, ignorance and sin, and who occasionally gaze upward to the realms of idealism and spirituality. I have this joyous, optimistic, exalted and hopeful view of life because I believe that there is a God in Heaven who rules the earth, and because I am convinced that God is good and has breathed the spirit of goodness and happiness upon His handiwork.

Will you ask me what, then, is the meaning of all this suffering and pain that surround us? What is the significance of the wailing and sobbing that so frequently fill the air? Why do bereavement and sorrow wither our choicest flowers? Why do misfortune and sickness cast a gloom upon our sky? Why do injustice and oppression occupy the honored places, while sincerity and truth are pushed into the background? Then I answer with the great bard: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." I cannot deny the existence of evil in this world, nor do I ignore the troubles and sorrows of life. But what I do desire to emphasize is:—first, that there is also plenty of happiness, and, second, that the greatest part of the troubles of life is of our own making. We are extremely ungrateful when we continually grumble about the sorrows that sometimes visit us and forget the joys that gladdened us for years. While weeks of fair weather will pass without a comment, one hour's storm will evoke a volley of complaint from our breasts. The years of plenty are soon forgotten in the years of want. It is like the story books we read, where hundreds of pages are filled with the struggles and dangers of the hero and heroine, and one

line suffices to state that "They were happy and lived to a good old age."

There certainly is a good deal of misery in this world, but subtract from it the misfortunes that men bring upon themselves; the ills that are caused by ignorance, immorality, excess and foolhardiness; discount the pains and aches resulting from disobedience to the laws of nature and of nature's God; count off the thousands of unnatural shocks that flesh would not be heir to, if not subjected to by vice, by indolence and by over-indulgence, and the sum total of human woe will not be as disheartening as the disgruntled pessimists would have us believe. Fortune certainly hurls its slings and arrows at us, but none are so dangerous as not to be made harmless by the armor of faith. The darkness of error may be ever so great, yet the sunshine of knowledge and wisdom can scatter it. No pain is so agonizing as not to be relieved by the balm of hope; no obstacles are so insurmountable as not to be overcome by unfaltering courage. Well has it been said by Southey, "A good man and a wise man may at times be angry with the world, at times grieve for it; but be sure no man was ever discontented with the world who did his duty in it."

Let then this be our answer to the question, "Is life worth living?" Yes, life *is* worth living to those who set a noble purpose before themselves. Life is worth living to those who strive to secure the highest and most harmonious development of their powers; it is worth living to those who are of some use to their fellow-men, who live for something higher than the gratification of their own desires, who try to comfort the sorrowing, help the distressed, uplift the fallen, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, encourage the despondent and pour a little sunshine into hearts bedimmed with gloom and grief; and finally, it is worth living to those who feel that above this world of vanity there is a great and everlasting reality, that God is the all-pervading spirit of the universe; and to those whose faith in God is sufficiently strong to guide them through the rocky and thorny paths of existence. "The riddle of the world is understood only by him who feels that God is good."

My friends, let me relate to you an old Arabian legend: *King Nimrod one day summoned his three sons and ordered three urns under seal to be set before them; one was of gold,

* From Baxendale's Dictionary of Anecdote.

the other of amber, the third of clay. The King bade the eldest of his sons to choose that which appears to contain the treasure of greatest price. He chose the vase of gold, upon which was written EMPIRE, opened it and found it full of blood. The second took the vase of amber on which was written the word GLORY, opened it and found it full of the ashes of men who made a great sensation in life. The third took the clay vase remaining, opened it and found it empty, but on the bottom the potter had inscribed the name of GOD. "Which of these vases weighs the most?" asked the King of his courtiers. The men of ambition replied the vase of gold. The poets and conquerors said the amber one, but the sages pointed to the empty vase because a single letter of the name of God was of more weight than the entire globe."

Oh, my friends, take the lesson, choose a worthy aim for your life and then, and only then, will it contain happiness and contentment for you. Some of you may dream of the empire of gold; to get a fortune may be the utmost desire of your ambition; for the almighty dollar you are willing to sacrifice the nobler aspects and aims of humanity. You spend your strength, your energy, your time in the vain chase after gold, thinking that thereof is made the key to happiness. But beware, it may prove a snare to you.—Open the golden vase and you will find it full of blood.

You may dream of glory, of might, of power, of fame. You care not at what cost, you would like to win the applause of your fellow-men and bask in the sunshine of popular admiration. For the cap and bells of renown and honor, you are satisfied to sell your lives. You envy the splendor, the fame and the glory of those whose names are heralded abroad and inscribed in marble and bronze, but you forget that the end of all glory and honor and worldly success are dust and ashes. You open the vase of amber and you find that it is full of the ashes of men of great renown.

Oh, choose. therefore, the vase upon which there is inscribed the name of God and you will have chosen well. You will then discover the solution to the riddle that puzzles us, the riddle of this life; you shall then possess a compass to guide you through this labyrinth where so many lose their bearings and become filled with despair; you will then have found the main and all-embracing purpose which *does* make life worth living.

My friends, I shall endeavor in subsequent lectures to present to you in detail some of the things that make life worth living. We shall treat some of the great aims and objects to which the lives of the noblest men and women have been consecrated and wherein they found peace and happiness. To-night I hope that I made clear to you that life is a blessed and divine gift, an opportunity which man should prize highly and utilize wisely. In the future we will learn how to make the most of this precious opportunity so that when the time comes that we have to render an account of it to Him who sent us hither, we shall be sustained by the blessed consciousness that we have done our duty.—AMEN.

EDUCATION.

TEXT:—"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the obtaining of her is better than the obtaining of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold. . . . The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens." (Proverbs III, 13, 14, 19.)

EDUCATION is considered by many as a means to an end, not as a goal for which man should strive. They value education as a leveller of the path, as a tool by which one can construct a life of comfort and success. Very few indeed, are those who at the present stage of civilization would question the utility of education; but while regarding it as a powerful weapon in the struggle for existence, they fail to see in it one of the greatest blessings of life which, aside from its value in dollars and cents, is a gift of priceless worth. I advocate education not merely to make better competitors in the strife for success, but to make better men and better women. "Education"—as Sir John Lubbock says—"is not intended to make Lawyers and Clergymen, Soldiers or Schoolmasters, Farmers or Artisans, but Men." The etymology of the word "education" indicates that it means the bringing out or development of the noblest forces of our nature; the awakening of the grandest faculties that are slumbering in our souls.

Education, when thus defined, becomes a treasure, the very process of acquiring which is a privilege and a blessing; it becomes a most precious heritage, which to possess is worth years of toil and struggle—nay, a whole life-time of unremitting energy and zeal. We can hardly overestimate the importance of education. It makes us worthy of the name of man, without which we have but little claim of being distinguished from the other animals, whose existence is confined within the narrow scope of living, feeding and procuring food and off-spring. Aristotle said: "The educated differ from the uneducated as the living from the dead." And while we would not readily endorse this view of the greatest philosopher of antiquity, we must admit that ignorance is a curse, a calamity, a source of evil, and the mother of crime and corruption. Victor Hugo said that "He who opens a school closes a prison."

Education opens our eyes and makes us fit to do our duty in the several spheres whither Providence has placed us. When Adam and Eve had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, then "their eyes were opened." It is not necessary to enter into the old controversy whether college graduates are more fit for the work of the world than the "self-made" men. No doubt there are young men in the colleges that would make better grocery clerks than students, but their failure is not the fault of education, but of their inability to make use of the opportunities offered to them. All arguments against education based on the success that "self-made" men sometimes achieved, have no more relevance than to reason that eyesight is not necessary because some blind men have accomplished great things in the world. Those many "self-made" men who, because of industry and endurance have become great and famous, regretted most bitterly the fact that in their youth they had no opportunity to get an education. Abraham Lincoln, until the very last days of his life, deplored his neglected training. Peter Cooper also persisted to the very last in regretting the lack of schooling as the great misfortune of his life. He used to say, "If I could have had such advantages as we give the poorest boy now, how much more could I have done!" Who knows how much greater our "self-made" men would be if they had had good training in their youth. "Experience is a dear school"—says Franklin—"but fools will learn in no other."

Education makes men broad-minded. The ignorant man is limited in his views. "Education lights up the history of the world and makes it one bright path of progress; it enables us to appreciate the literature of the world; it opens for us the book of nature and creates sources of interest wherever we find ourselves." (Lubbock.) Superstition, intolerance, fanaticism and bigotry—these blights of humanity that caused rivers of blood to flow, have their hot-bed in ignorance. Education causes the darkness of race-hatred and oppression to recede and the torch of liberty and of liberality to illumine the hearts and minds of men. Show me an untutored, illiterate and ignorant man and I will show you one who is circumscribed in his judgment and swayed by prejudices and passions, and whom unprincipled men can use as their tool for wrongdoing.

Education, moreover, is a great source of happiness. The joys of intellect are incomparably superior to those that appeal to our sensuous nature. There comes a time when the mate-

rial pleasures lose their former power to satisfy our desires. Anxiety and sorrow come when the merriment of the days of sunshine has lost its charm and we crave for something more real and more lasting. What a blessing is it if in those days of gloom we possess a mind cultivated to think and stored with the invaluable gems of the intellectual products of the past! What a boon to have the means of escaping from ourselves and getting absorbed in the noble themes that occupied the thoughts of the noblest men and women of all ages! In old age, when the physical powers of man are declining, what a difference between the educated and the ignorant man! One is leading a dreary, uninteresting and gloomy life, a mere shadow of his former self, sinking into listlessness and indifference. The other is rejoicing in his intellectual pursuits, weaving the threads of thought in the loom of wisdom, enriching others by his ever-ripening knowledge, possessing a cool head, a warm heart, and a sound judgment until the golden gleam of sunset merges into the starry night of eternity!

These being the blessed rewards of education, ought we not follow the advice of the royal philosopher of the Bible, who says that "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding?" (Proverbs IV, 7.) O, my friends, and especially those of you who stand on the threshold of life, take my advice and do all you possibly can to acquire knowledge. Have the courage to face the clock. See how its hands never stop. So does your youth pass, and your golden days of spring and your precious years of opportunity shall soon be over. A fierce struggle awaits you. In the battlefield of the future he will be triumphant who will be best equipped with the weapons of wisdom and ready knowledge.

Are you preparing yourselves for that noble combat or do you slumber and resign yourselves to certain defeat? Do you appreciate the value of time? O, waste it not on external things. Bestow thought on the development of the soul.

Now is the time to study, to read, to think, to accumulate intellectual treasures which will bear you a rich interest in the future. There is no excuse for ignorance in this country. The land is dotted with schools, colleges, universities, libraries and museums. Millions are spent on education by the government and more by private individuals, generous men and women who thoroughly comprehend the value of a dollar, but who also know that wisdom is more precious than gold. Truly can it be said,

"Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets. (Proverbs I, 20.) Oh, how many of you utilize these precious opportunities? How many live as if there would be nothing worth striving after, and toiling and working for, besides the necessities and comforts of daily life? How many waste the precious moments of their leisure in idleness, indolence and foolish gossip?

Nor should study cease after youth had given way to maturity. The following anecdote is related of Bossuet, the celebrated French bishop. Sometime after Louis XIV had appointed him to a certain bishopric, he asked the citizens how they liked their new bishop. "Why, your Majesty, we like him pretty well." "Pretty well! why, what fault have you to find with him?" "To tell the truth, we would have preferred having a bishop who had finished his education; for whenever we wait upon him, we are told that he is at his studies."—Our education is never finished. We ought to learn all the days of our life, and stop only when we cease to live. Our love for learning and for mental improvement when deeply rooted, ought to animate us at all times. No one is too old to learn. Truly does the German proverb say:

Wir leben um zu lernen
Und lernen um zu leben.

However, there is another way by which we can show our love for wisdom, namely, by aiding others to acquire it. If we have not done fully our duty in this respect, let us remedy the fault by carefully directing the mental training of our children and by liberally supporting those who devote their life to the advancement of learning.

Our duty, of course, begins at home. The education of our children ought to be an object of our constant and earnest solicitude. Fathers and mothers ought personally supervise and control the schooling of their children in secular as well as in religious studies. They should never be too busy to look after their children's progress and attendance. This supervision should be constant and regular, only thus will it prove beneficial. Parents should do their utmost to get the best possible education for their children. William Penn said: "In education all is lost that is saved." By bestowing wisdom upon your children you supply them with a treasure which is the most precious, for it can neither be stolen, given away, nor consumed. You can never pay too high a price for the education of your children, if it is

performed properly. Here, however, I touch upon a weak point. While people are anxious to educate their children, they exhibit remarkable economy and even niggardliness in the remuneration of teachers. Communities, too, commit the same fault. Teachers are the poorest paid of all municipal officials, and yet they perform the noblest service to the city and to the nation. There is hardly another occupation which demands so much self-sacrifice, devotion, untiring zeal and life-shortening fatigue as does teaching. Perfunctory performance of duty will never bring good results. The teacher must put her soul, her affection and all her concentrated powers into the work and only thus can she succeed in awakening the soul of the child to the perception of truth and knowledge. This kind of labor is so arduous that few can continue it for many years without a serious detriment to their physical well-being. And yet how little is the work of teachers appreciated! How thankless is their task!

My friends, to-night there is a large meeting at the Academy of Music, where prominent educators are advocating increased salaries for the public school teachers of Philadelphia. I hope that these efforts on behalf of the most faithful servants of the city will meet with success. I hope that if the authorities of the city see fit to exercise economy, they will exercise it in some other directions and not by denying the comforts of life and the prospects for a competence in old age to those who have in their hands the moulding of the manhood and womanhood of the future, and upon whose efforts depend the morality and the happiness of the coming generation.

Our sages of old well appreciated the mission of teachers. A Rabbi, thus records the Talmud, once came to a place and asked for the guardians of the city. He was introduced to the chiefs of the police. "No!—the Rabbi said—"these are not the guardians of the city. Have you any schools in your town?" He was brought to a school and pointing to the teachers, the sage said: "These are the guardians of the city!" Indeed, this truth so well understood by Israel's sages sixteen hundred years ago is only gradually gaining recognition in the world. Not the police, nor the penal institutions are the guarantees of the safety of society. Not in the army, nor in the navy, nor in fortresses lie the strength of the nation and the security of the republic. Every school where virtue and patriotism are taught is a mighty fortress which no foe can conquer. It is there where this republic's strength and honor are safe-guarded.

Every teacher who conscientiously performs his or her duty is a benefactor of the nation and a defender of the people's liberties. Train a good citizen and you have served your country fully as much as he who faces death on the battlefield.

When will mankind at large recognize the fact that the heroes of peace deserve as much honor and reward as the heroes of war? While the soldier gets the applause of the people and is crowned with laurels, the teacher who works patiently and offers a life of unremitting toil upon the altar of patriotism, lives unappreciated and dies "unwept, unhonored and unsung!"

My friends, I cannot conclude this lecture without referring at least briefly to the crying necessity of a more thorough religious education in this country. It is in this respect where most of us fail, and Jews in particular are sadly deficient. Ignorance of the tenets of our faith, of the Bible, of the Hebrew language and of our glorious history is so prevalent, that we have reason to be anxiously concerned about the future of Judaism in America. It is a grave error we commit when we think we have done our duty by acquiring for ourselves and procuring for our children a general education without devoting time and thought to the study of religion. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom," and all education that is not coupled with sound principles of faith and morality is practically worthless. The greatest of all sciences is the science of life and the greatest art is to know how to live so as to become useful to ourselves and to humanity.

The cultivation of the mind without the cultivation of the heart is apt to do more harm than good. If our educated young men and young women have proven a disappointment, be sure the fault is to be found in the fact, that while climbing the giddy heights of knowledge, they neglected to take with them the staff of faith and hence have plunged into the depths of sin and failure.

It is, therefore, essential to combine sound moral training with a thorough secular education and thus, and only thus, will we be equipped to enter the ranks of those whose life is really worth living.

Let us, then, never cease to improve our minds to ennoble our souls and to elevate our characters, making as our motto:

"What is good and fair
Shall ever be our care."

AMEN.

LITERATURE.

TEXT:—"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels."—(Proverbs I, 5.)

EDUCATION is a blessing which to possess is a worthy aim for all men. But how many are so situated as to be able to acquire a good education? Are not most of our boys and girls prevented by circumstances from attending higher institutions of learning? Only a small percentage of them can afford to take advantage of our high schools and colleges, while the rest must enter life and engage in the struggle for existence while still in early youth. How shall this large majority of our youth obtain the mental training and the information indispensable to a life of usefulness and happiness? How shall they acquire the knowledge and the culture by which to perfect their manhood and womanhood? Fortunately, we are in a position to offer a solution to this problem. Literature is a school which is open to all who can read, young and old, rich and poor, workingman or businessman alike. Carlyle said that "all education is only learning how to read and the best university is a library of books." Well may we bless Cadmus who invented letters by which man's thoughts can be made to endure on paper, and well may we glorify the memory of Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, through whom books were made accessible to the poor as well as to the rich.

Next to oral instruction, reading of good books is the best means by which culture can be obtained and the mind improved. Some of our greatest men achieved honor and fame because of the reading habit which they acquired in their youth. Says Professor Matthews: "The most original thinkers have been most ready to acknowledge their obligations to other minds, whose wisdom has been hived in books." Gibbon acquired from his aunt an early and invincible love of reading, which he declared "he would not exchange for the treasures of India." Benjamin Franklin while yet a young boy by some chance got hold of Cotton Mather's "Essays to do Good," and to the influence of this book he traced his entire career of success and renown. Lincoln's wonderful rise from obscurity and poverty

to the highest position to which an American can aspire, was in no small degree due to his love of reading and his passion for books. He had a marvelous eagerness to get hold of some good book and devour its contents, and he would often walk for miles to borrow a book. The three books he first absorbed were the Bible, "Aesop's Fables," and the "Pilgrim's Progress." On these three, says a biographer, was formed the literary taste of Abraham Lincoln. So diligently did he study them that he could repeat from memory many whole chapters of the Bible, all of the striking passages of Bunyan's immortal book, and every one of the fables of Aesop.

Not only is reading one of the best means of enriching the mind, but it is one of the purest and noblest pleasures of life. Literature, in the first place, introduces us into the company of the greatest and noblest men and women of all ages. The companionship of the noble, wise, good and true, is certainly a great privilege. How people will flock to have a chance of getting a glimpse at some literary celebrity! To shake the hand of some famous statesman, or scientist, or even to be permitted to listen to the words of some poet or novelist is regarded a distinction of great note, and yet, as Ruskin says: "There is a society continually open to us of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank or occupation;—talk to us in the best words they can choose, and of the things nearest to their hearts. And this society, because it is so numerous and so gentle, and can be kept waiting around us all day long—kings and statesmen lingering patiently, not to grant audience, but to gain it!—in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms, our book-case shelves,—we make no account of that company,—perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long." *"He that loveth a book," says Isaac Barrow. "will never want a faithful friend, a wholesome counsellor, a cheerful companion, an effectual comforter." "Books," says Jeremy Collier, "are a guide in youth and an entertainment for age. They support us under solitude, and keep us from being a burden to ourselves. They help us to forget the crossness of men and things; compose our cares and passions; and lay our disappointments asleep."

Moreover, literature opens a new vista to our mental vision, widens our horizon and deepens our sympathies. It brings us out of the narrow and circumscribed circle of our daily activities

*Quoted by Lubbock in "*The Pleasures of Life.*"

and reveals to us different men and conditions and times with different problems and anxieties. Literature, to use Viscount Goschen's phrase, gives us "a mental change of scene." "And over what worlds will not fancy enable you to roam?—The world of the past, ideal worlds and other worlds beyond your sight, probably brighter worlds, possibly more interesting worlds than the narrow world in which most of us are compelled to live; at all events, different worlds, and worlds that give us change."

It makes us less selfish, less self-centred, more sympathetic and liberal minded and fills us with an interest for our fellow-creatures of all climes and countries. Our humanity is exalted, our imagination cultivated, our opinions well directed and our prejudices shattered by the subtle and yet mighty influence of the books we read.

Seeing that these are the benefits of reading, we ought to try to acquire the reading habit. It is a reading world in which we live and those who cannot see the value and pleasure of reading have not kept pace with the march of time. Moreover, we live in a blessed age when the master-pieces of the greatest thinkers can be procured for a price that ought to enable every one to have a little collection of choice books in his home. Somebody said that a home without books is like a body without a soul. Then, consider the great facilities for increasing our knowledge we have in the large libraries that circulate hundreds of thousands of volumes annually! Those who in the midst of this abundance of intellectual food still prefer to remain hungry are throwing away most precious opportunities for which some day they will be sorry.

But there are some who claim to be too busy to read books. The duties that an intense struggle for existence imposes upon them are too manifold and too arduous to allow leisure and calmness of mind necessary for reading. A busy commercial or professional life leaves indeed but little time for self-improvement. Busy people cannot spend hours every day in reading. But I do believe that almost anybody could spare a few minutes, or say an hour a day in reading some useful book. The trouble is not so much the lack of time, as the lack of effort and the want of desire for exercising one's mental capacities. There are a good many people who got out of the habit or perhaps never learned to do any serious intellectual work, except what is necessary in conducting their business. They have no desire for knowledge. They experience no yearning to know something

of this great world, of the earth upon which they live, and of its people with their problems, their struggles, and their aspirations. They live a narrow, crippled and stinted life. The less they know the less they feel their ignorance. It is only when we get a taste of knowledge that the desire to increase our intellectual treasures asserts itself. If those who never made it a practice to take a good book into their hands would once make the experiment, I am sure they would be impelled to repeat it and would gradually become accustomed to such mental efforts, and then they would always find time for reading. Every one has some leisure time. Without it neither man, nor beast, nor machine, could continue doing any work. The question only is how to utilize this leisure time. Should we use it for things that debase and degrade, or for things that refine and ennoble? One of the best ways of judging men's characters is by examining the nature of their recreations. Taking the manner in which a large class of people see fit to spend their spare hours as a criterion, their characters will not appear in a very brilliant light. Many are those who consider card-playing as one of the pleasantest ways of spending an evening or a vacation. I am not referring to those who sink so low as to gamble, but to those who indulge in a "harmless, sociable game." Let us admit that the sociable game is harmless, and that in the case of mature people it will not lead to the cursed vice of gambling and eventually to ruined homes and wrecked lives. Supposing, then, it is harmless, I ask, what good is there in it? Does it make for better manhood and better womanhood? Does it inculcate a more thorough knowledge of the duties of man to man and man to God? Is it worth spending precious hours of this fleeting short life without some real benefit or some elevating and ennobling pleasure? Playing cards should be avoided not only because it gradually may lead to gambling, which usually results in spiritual and material ruin, but because it is a fearful loss of time and because that precious time—oh, so precious, because so limited and so uncertain—could be used for a glorious purpose, for the development of those talents which God graciously bestowed upon us, for the fanning of the divine spark which He breathed into our nostrils until it becomes a mighty flame shedding brightness and joy all around!

If instead of spending our spare time in recreations that are worse than idleness, and in amusements that not only lack all claim to refinement but are positively degrading, we would taste

of those joys that according to the testimony of the good and the wise come from good literature, how much better and nobler would we be, and how much fitter to grapple with temptation and sin! If men would seek relief from their daily labors not in exciting, time-wasting and money-squandering games, but in the upbuilding of their mental faculties and in widening and deepening their knowledge, how much happier would they and their dear ones be! If women would not spend afternoons in this "harmless, sociable game," but would endeavor to understand their duties as wives and mothers, as guardian angels of the home and as sponsors of the purity and nobility of the coming generation, endeavoring to infuse the love for learning and for wisdom into the hearts of their children—how much brighter would be the future of this republic! If our sons and daughters would not waste their youthful years in chasing after foolish amusements and debasing pleasures, but would drink deeply at the fountain of knowledge and acquire a taste for good books, and, by reading them, gain precious lessons of life and its manifold duties and dangers, how much more real and lasting honor and happiness would there be in store for them, how much more bravely would they face the unknown future which lies before them!

My friends, while emphasizing the importance of literature and the necessity of acquiring the reading habit, I must also say a few words on the question "What to read?" If you do read, read something worth while. Do not read any trash. To read through word for word the daily paper or that modern literary monstrosity, the Sunday paper, with all the disgusting details about every murder, suicide or social scandal is not very conducive to mental and moral development. While all who desire to be abreast with the times and be well-informed concerning the events of the day must read papers, let them get the cleanest and best ones issued, and not spend more time on them than they deserve. As to books, let us state that not all books are worth reading. Some are useless because they contain no original thought, and others are pernicious because they are immoral and vicious. It is far better not to read at all than to read bad books. They ought to be banished from the home and from the library, for they poison the minds of their readers. No matter how clever a book may be or how attractive its style, if it has an evil influence by tending to disrupt the established laws of morality and virtue and by painting vice with alluring colors,

it ought to be shunned like leprosy. Take, for instance, the unhealthy, sensational or morbidly sentimental novels that are being turned out annually by the thousands and eagerly devoured by our young men and young women! Some of them are written in a brilliant style, but as they inculcate unchastity they ought to be avoided even as moral poison. A vicious book is like a bad companion, it corrupts and pollutes the character. Oh, many are the victims of the morbid spirit that pervades the modern realistic and vitiated novel, and many will be devoured by this Moloch to which our youth sacrifice, if not saved by intelligent and careful guides, directing them to the glorious productions of the immortal masters of ancient and of modern times.

Why spend your time in perusing the worthless works of some second-hand novelist, while the works of such acknowledged geniuses as Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, Scott, Dickens, Elliot, Gibbon, Macaulay, Emerson and of the other divinely-gifted poets, novelists and historians remain neglected and unread? Why be satisfied picking the ignoble weeds of the garden of literature and tread under foot the beautiful flowers that spread fragrance and joy? Why be content with reading the ephemeral productions of mediocre or inferior authors and remain ignorant of "that volume to which the world's literature, profane and sacred, pays unconscious tribute, by calling it THE BOOK"—namely, the Bible? As one recently wrote: "Grand in its simplicity, unmatched in its sublimity, vast in its variety, wonderful in its internal unity, peerless in its power to stimulate man's higher nature, and satisfying in its views of the world and of human life, the Bible is a library in itself. It contains history the most ancient, biography the most unique, poetry the most exquisite, allegory the must enchanting, and laws the most imperative."

Aside from the fact that the Bible is the inspired word of God, full of guidance for man's life, from a literary standpoint it stands pre-eminent among the treasures of humanity. Sir John Lubbock, giving a list of one hundred of the best books in the world's literature, places the Bible at the head of the list. It must be admitted that the man or woman who has not at least a fair familiarity with the contents of the Bible cannot claim the distinction of being considered cultured. What shall we say of those members of the "People of the Book," descendants of those great prophets and poets and writers that produced the noblest book of humanity, who are strangers to their glorious

heritage? It is a pity, alas, that the number of Jews who know almost nothing of the Bible is so very large, but it is a still greater pity that they allow the perpetuation of this woful ignorance in their children and take no pains to impress them with the importance of reading what is best and noblest in the world's literature and particularly with the importance of reading the greatest Book that was ever written—the Bible.

My friends, cultivate your taste. If you have not hitherto had any appreciation for the precious works of literature, try to create in yourselves a desire to know what the wisest men and women have said and written upon subjects of universal human interest. Do not be content to remain in self-satisfied ignorance. Aspire for something higher and nobler than that to which you devoted your past. Learn to appreciate the good, the true and the beautiful by absorbing the thoughts, the sentiments and the ideas which men of wisdom and genius have left for us in their books as an everlasting inheritance. Do not devote all your energies to your material needs. Consider your necessities as a thinking, feeling, hoping and aspiring creature, and try to rise to the heights of true humanity by utilizing your time for purposes noble and eternal, remembering that "time is a sacred gift and each day is a little life."—AMEN.

HOME.

TEXT:—"Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young. . . ."—(Psalm LXXXIV, 3.)

I HAVE endeavored during the past few weeks, my dear friends, to present to you some of the supreme blessings which invest human existence with dignity and purpose and compensate for the "whips and scorns of time." Among the things that "make life worth living," I considered Education and Literature, two media by which man can raise himself from the level of other sentient beings to the state of a highly developed, intellectual and moral creature—the kind the Psalmist designated as "a little lower than the angels." But there is a more primitive and more diffused boon which is among the foremost things that sweeten human life and make its ills endurable, and that is, the *Home*. Long before the alphabet was known, ages before the idea of a school ever entered the mind of man, the home was an influence that tended to the elevation of the human race. The home is the most ancient institution, having been the germ from which most other human organizations developed. The State and the Church have their origin in the crude home which semi-savage man built in the cave to shelter himself and his family. There the first seeds of law, of order, of obedience to authority and of devotion to a higher Power, were sown into the human soul, which thousands of years later produced such magnificent fruition. Then, indeed, the home was the all in all to man.

But even in our present state of civilization, with our highly developed institutions, with all the complexity of our social, political and religious organizations, the home has not lost in importance—it is still the foundation-stone upon which human society rests, and without which it would crumble and fall. With the progress of man, as he gradually emerged from the animal condition, the home, too, assumed a higher character and subserved nobler ends. We no longer think of the home merely as a shelter from the elements, or as a protection from the attacks of enemies. We rather associate with it those comforts and joys which family life confers upon us. We think of the home as

the one place where we find rest from the bitter struggle for existence, as the refuge from the strife, the rivalry and the tussle in which we are engaged. What a blessing is the home! How cold and dreary would life be without the sweet influence of the fireside! There we find comfort when, amidst the toil and the labor of the world, our hearts become saddened and discouraged; there our storm-tossed vessel finds a harbor of safety; there we are sure to find sympathy if the rest of the world turns away from us in the hour of distress; there we can breathe freely and speak openly, knowing that love does not misunderstand nor misconstrue our words. No matter how hard our fate is, no matter how bitter our misfortune and how deep our distress, within the blessed circle of our beloved ones we are sure to find some healing balm and some sincere sympathy.

What would life be without the dear home? The constant rebuffs we meet with, the selfishness and sin that cross our path, the hatred, the envy, the hypocrisy, the thousand and one ills that the weary, humdrum, dull and prosaic workaday flings at us, would make life a barren desert and the world a vale of tears, if the happy home would not instil courage and fortitude into our despairing breasts. The home is indeed the Eden which God planted for man's delight; it is a Heaven on earth where we have a foretaste of those joys which the immortals share in the regions of Eternity. It blesses us throughout our lifetime. There the cradle of our infancy is sheltered; there our manhood and womanhood reap their sweetest reward; and there our drooping old age awaits the end in calm serenity.

The home is the garden where the fairest flowers of moral excellence are cultivated. It is the best school in the world. What has been neglected in it cannot be replenished in after life. You see a man admirable in deportment, staunch in principle and firm in character, and you ask yourself where has all this excellence come from? You may be sure that behind this human nobility was a good and happy home where the sterling qualities, whose germs are within every soul, were carefully nurtured, even as the gardener tends the flowers under his care. The mighty tree has its root deep in the soil and the great man has his origin in a home where love held sway and virtue ruled supreme.

Even the memory of a happy home is one of our most precious possessions. Long after the dear old homestead had been engulfed by the waves of the rushing years, long after the be-

loved beings that blessed it with their self-sacrificing love had passed into the beyond, the reminiscence of our childhood's home is a pleasant picture indelibly painted upon the tablets of our hearts.

Sad is the lot of those who lost their parents in early youth and who had to start life with the disadvantage of lacking the guidance of a father and of a mother. But bitter is also the portion of those who though not deprived by the hand of death of these natural guardians, nevertheless fail to experience a thrill of joy when the home of their youth is recalled because the recollection is mixed with bitterness and sorrow. Alas, there are such unfortunate people, because not all homes are happy. Think of this, fathers and mothers! Not all homes are happy! To which class does yours belong? What kind of impression will your children take along with them from their parental fireside? One that will serve them as a prop and stay, as an inspiration and benediction for the struggles and temptations that await them, or one that will handicap them in their undertakings and hinder them from achieving a high degree of honor and happiness? Oh, think not for a moment that your material condition is the important element which goes to make up a home. Think not that stones or bricks, marble or granite, pictures or furniture, rugs or bric-a-brac constitute a happy home. These things are all very good and desirable in their way. But you are making the mistake of your life if you think that wealth and affluence, luxuries and comforts are essentials to make life blessed and happy. When you will be gone and your bric-a-brac and furniture and pictures shall have been distributed among the quarreling heirs, will the possession of these fragile objects of your ambition be an inspiration to your children for noble living and right acting? Experience answers, No! History replies, No! Common sense says, No! Your house may be ever so beautiful and stored with the rarest treasures. If love, peace and virtue are not among its ornaments, it is not a home—it is a house, an establishment, a lodging-place, call it what you will, but do not bestow upon it the fair, the sacred and the blessed name of *Home!*

The most real things in life are not material objects, but spiritual and moral ideals. The country which you love and for which you are ready to die, is not the territory of land contained within its boundaries. It is the aggregate of the ideals, the principles and the aspirations which centuries of endeavor

have made synonymous with the name of your country. Likewise it is with the home. The material objects gain their value and importance because of the ideals that are inseparably associated with them. We cherish an heirloom not because of its intrinsic value, but because it recalls some person who was dear to us, or some event that was of great moment to us. It is always the invisible, the intangible, the spiritual element that constitutes the real worth of things.

Thus let us learn the qualities of a happy home. First comes *Peace.* This is its foundation. Without peace the home is like a structure raised on sand—it will tumble down when the first storm of passion will blow over it. When husband and wife live in discord, when strife and contention mar the sacred joys of the domestic circle, when harmony and mutual forbearance cease to characterize this most holy of all human relationships, then happiness makes itself wings and flies from the home, leaving it a dreary and comfortless place indeed. Oh, if those, who by reason of stubbornness and bad temper indulge in these domestic skirmishes, would think of the unspeakable joys which they thus thoughtlessly cast away; if they would consider that by these contentions they not only embitter their own lives but also the lives of their innocent children, robbing them of that great boon, the memory of a happy home, they would more carefully endeavor to preserve peace in their family life, even though such peace would involve the sacrifice of some selfishness and the abandonment of a little pride.

However, peace alone is not sufficient to make an ideal home. The white flag of truce may wave over the hearth and yet, it is felt, that something is missing to complete its happiness. The atmosphere of the home should be pervaded by the spirit of *Love.* Tenderness, considerateness, tact and sympathy will then be exhibited in every act, no matter how indifferent and common-place. There are, unfortunately, many homes where these qualities are wanting, and where the canker-worm of discontent destroyed the tender blossoms of affection. Love does not thrive in the frigid atmosphere of indifference. Many husbands, engrossed in business, fail to devote sufficient time and attention to their families. It is not enough that the husband provides the necessities of life for his family. To make them truly happy he must give them himself, his time, his love and his devotion. Those men who seek for rest and

recreation in the club room have to blame their own neglect if the home proves disappointing to them.

The wife, however, has the lion's share in making the home an Eden of sweet harmony. I read somewhere that the English word "wife" is supposed to be derived from the word "weave," meaning one who weaves. Originally it referred to the custom obtained in olden times that the wife wove with her hands the garments of her husband. She is no longer required to do this. But she still has the power of weaving her husband's happiness and prosperity. There is many a man who owes his success in life to the blessed influence, the co-operation and the gentle guidance of his helpmate. Woman's home-making power is very great. A Jewish sage said that wife and home are synonymous. A woman's influence can either make of home heaven or hell. By her tact, her gentleness, her common sense and her self-sacrifice she can brighten the home and make it a joy and a delight to husband and children; or by her selfishness, her irritableness, her bad temper, her nagging and fault-finding, she can make life burdensome and kindle the fires of Hades upon the hearth.

If she understands her duties, and knows the secret power of a smiling face, and of a soft answer, she will find it easy to keep her husband at home, where he belongs. Husband and wife should so live that it should become true of them:

> "They share all troubles, and by sharing halve them;
> "They share all pleasures, and by sharing double them."

But the picture of a happy home is not yet complete. *Religion* is an essential factor to make a home ideal in its happiness, harmony and love. Let us suppose a family that live in peace and devotion, but disregard the eternal laws of justice, of honesty, of brotherly love, of charity and of religion. Are they truly happy? If their conscience has some spark of life, does it not torment them with terrible remorse and pangs? Can the members of the family have respect for one another when in their midst justice is outraged and virtue is insulted? Can they have the respect of their fellow-men when the world knows them as sinful and selfish, as mean and dishonest? Without self-respect and the respect of your fellows no happiness can exist. In order to obtain that boon there must be in your soul a high regard for righteousness and moral principles. All evil acts must be shunned and sin must be abhorred. The ideas of honor, of virtue and of fairness must be constantly taught and exempli-

fied by the elders so that they find lodgement in the heart and strike deep root in the soul of the young. Do you wish to know how to make a happy home? Take God into it. It has been truly said that "If no window opens into heaven, it is not a true home." Jewish homes have as a rule been happy because Religion was their foundation and Virtue their fairest jewel. The fear of God permeated them. Fidelity to Law was their marked characteristic. The spirit of prayer suffused its elevating and ennobling influence over all the members of the family. The home was a veritable sanctuary where the sweet sacrifices of mutual respect, of conjugal affection, parental duty and filial obedience were willingly brought upon the altar of God. Because such was the Jewish home, Judaism still is.

Of late, however, the Jewish home has abandoned a good many of those features which once entitled it to the appellation "holy." Religion is banished from its midst. The voice of prayer is no longer heard in its precincts. Reverence for things sacred is not inculcated. The spirit of skepticism and of infidelity has crept into our homes, causing ravages and loosening the tender bonds of love and of affection. If these conditions continue, God help our children! Your children are thirsting for faith, they are yearning for the prop of religion to support them in life's battles. Why deny to them this precious boon? A prayerless, Godless and irreligious home is a cheerless place for childhood to unfold and for youth to develop. It is a calamity whose evil influence can be detected in character until the close of life. Banish, then, the serpent of irreligion from the Eden of your home. Cultivate in it the noble virtues of Peace, Love and Faith, and then, whether it be rich or poor, whether a humble cottage or a proud palace, yours will be the sweetest home in the world, whose influence will be perpetual, and whose fragrance will bless all who come beneath its roof—yea, it will flourish "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, and whose leaf shall never wither."

AMEN.

HOPE

TEXT:—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? *Hope* thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."—(Psalm XLII, 5.)

LESSING once said: "If the All-powerful Being holding in one hand Truth and in the other the search for truth, said to me, 'Choose,' I would answer him, 'O, All-powerful, keep for Thyself the Truth, but leave to me the search for it, which is the better for me." What this thinker said of truth I can justly state of hope. "If the All-powerful Being holding in one hand the realization of all human desires and in the other hope, said to me 'Choose,' I would answer him, O, All-powerful, keep for Thyself reality, but leave to me hope which is the better for me." For were I in the possession of all things that the boldest imagination can conjure up, lacking hope, I would still lack the zest for life and would find existence tortured by monotony. Treasures would lose their value and pleasures their charm if not spiced by the expectation of to-morrow's new and unknown joys. Let man be placed into an Eden of Happiness where lovely flowers blossom in perpetual spring and where all his desires are anticipated, but where hope is unknown, and he would gladly exchange such Eden for a place where toil and sorrow are mingled with the sweet drops of hope for better days. Great is the blessing of hope, unsurpassed by any other gift by which Providence has blessed humanity. Hope is the sunshine of the soul; without it our inner life would become barren and bare even as the earth plunged in darkness. Hope is like the dew and rain unto vegetation; without it our blossoms of joy would fade and wither.

Because such is hope, God has made it a universal gift and has not withheld it from his lowliest creatures. Even as the stars shine most brilliantly in the moonless sky, so does hope flourish most luxuriantly in hearts devoid of all other joys. "The miserable," says Shakespeare, "have no other medicine but only hope." Dark and dreary is the hovel of the poor where hunger and privation like two evil demons stand at the threshold and keep joy and happiness from entering; yet as long as the angel of hope hovers over the fireside, despair is kept at a distance.

You enter the chamber of the sick. The sufferer is tossing in agony; the beloved ones walk gently and speak quietly and on every face there is anxiety, fear and grief. Yet even this atmosphere of gloomy forebodings is pervaded by the perfume of hope. The lamp of life may be burning ever so low, yet the pure oil of celestial hope lends its flickering flame unnatural radiance. When reason has folded its hands in impotence and even love is ready to give way to helplessness, hope refuses to leave the battle-field and assiduously fans the glimmering spark of life.

Even unto the breaking eyes of the dying hope presents the lovely picture of immortality. It pierces the darkness of the sepulchre and penetrates the hidden realms of death. It soothes the heart of the bereft with the promise of a tearless reunion in the hereafter, when the garments of mortality shall have been doffed and the white robes of eternity shall clothe us with glory and joy.

I know of no ill or woe to which hope is not an antidote. To him that is oppressed by tyranny hope whispers, "Wait, endure, and strive, for the day of reckoning is coming." To the slave drudging at the treadmill it paints a picture of freedom and of enlargement. To the captive pining in the dungeon it lights up the gloom with dreams of liberty. Unto the victims of malice, hope promises redress; unto the defeated it speaks of future victory. Well does the poet exclaim:

> "Auspicious Hope! in thy sweet garden grow
> Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe."

Hope causes men to act as well as to endure. The sweat-shop toiler works amidst the most miserable conditions of poverty and squalor. Amidst the dreary monotony of the whizzing and whirring wheels his humanity, his ambition, his aspirations would vanish and leave him a living corpse, an automaton, a human machine. But sweet hope is there to cheer him and to change the soul-killing noises into gentle harmonies. Thinking of his little ones at home, the sweat-shop worker says: "My children shall not be as their father was; my drudgery is not for self, but for love's sake; the sweat of my brow is oil in the lamp of love; I will light it to-night on the sacred altar of home."* The hope in the far-off future with its better conditions is a balsam to his wounds and instils sweet drops of comfort into his cup of bitterness.

*Hillis.

In a dimly-lighted room of a tenement house sits a sad woman. Poverty and distress are her companions. The past was one bitter struggle. The present is unremitting drudgery. But by her side in a cradle lies the budding hope of a brighter future. Affectionately bending over her infant she sings softly the lullaby that tells of his future achievements. Out of the distressing surroundings of reality, hope lifts her into the visionary realms of Dreamland where misery and want are unknown.

What is it that spurs the young man to industry and enterprise? What is it that impels the student to deprive himself of enjoyment and to burn the midnight oil while bending over the ponderous tomes of wisdom? What is it that causes the aspiring artist to spend years in the patient endeavor to acquire the technical skill that is the basis of all artistic attainment? It is this divine faculty of hope for plenteous recompense, for success, for happiness and for glory which strengthens our sinews and steels our will; that lends us courage, patience and perseverance to battle bravely with the difficulties that may chance to block our way.

A spirit of hopefulness or an optimistic belief that things will gradually improve, is an essential to success in life. Sooner will the sun make its appearance at midnight than success will come to him whose soul is plunged in the gloom of pessimism. Half-hearted, despondent, easily-discouraged people never amount to much in this world. I care not how well endowed you may be with talents, if you lack the disposition of discerning the silver lining behind the cloud, and you do not believe that after the storm the sun will shine again, and the birds will sing merrily—in a word, if you are not hopeful you have in yourself a guarantee of failure. We are told by Lubbock that Joseph Hume used to say that he would rather have a cheerful disposition than an estate of £10,000 a year. This is true not only from a sentimental standpoint, but also from the practical side. The great achievements of history were accomplished by the hopeful, the optimistic and the brave. Had Columbus been of a gloomy disposition this continent would probably still be the hunting ground of savages and the haunt of buffaloes. Had Robert Fulton been of a pessimistic nature when in 1807, amidst the greatest difficulties, he launched the first steamboat on the Hudson River, we would not have to-day the wonderful floating palaces crossing the Atlantic and uniting two continents into one. When Morse invented the telegraph his friends laughed at him. He turned

to France, to England and to the United States for assistance, but not a word of encouragement came from anywhere. Had he lacked courage and hope the world would have been deprived of the greatest invention of the nineteenth century. All these great inventors understood that "to know how to wait is the secret of success." As the Eastern proverb puts it: "Time and patience change the mulberry leaf to satin."

The hopeful spirit is necessary not only to great achievements, but also to an ordinary life of usefulness and duty. As long as the lamp of hope illumines our path we are apt to go ahead, no matter how rocky and thorny that path may be. Hope makes us cling to the post of duty amidst the most disagreeable conditions. Whether we toil with muscle or with brain hope lends us strength and zeal and doubles our capacity to do and to suffer. Times there are when conditions are disheartening and when the lack of encouragement induces us to abandon our tasks. The teacher toils conscientiously and patiently to mould the soul and the character of the child. Sometimes all toil seems to be vain. No improvement or progress is discernible, and the heart is saddened by ingratitude and lack of appreciation. The preacher teaches the word of God week after week. He sows the seeds of faith and of virtue into hearts that often seem barren and yield no fruit. His voice seems to be like a voice in the wilderness; his labors like the wasted toil of the Danaides whose punishment was to incessantly pour water into bottomless buckets. The civic reformer endeavors to improve the character of the government and to raise the moral status of the community. But his efforts, too, seem futile. Old corruptions thought to be buried raise their head again. The ancient evils against which the prophets of old lifted their clarion voices still impede the progress of justice and of righteousness. As of yore might usurps right and the powerful tread upon the weak. Thus we see that there are apparent reasons for discouragement at times in all departments of human endeavor, and he whose moral fibre is not strong enough is apt to fold his hands and idly bemoan the wickedness and hopelessness of the world.

But we must beware against these discordant notes issuing from a heart out of tune. The world is not as bad as the croaking pessimists would make it. On a whole, the world is steadily growing better. History tells us of no period when men were free from imperfection and evil. The "good old times" that aged people like to speak about, I am afraid, were no better than

ours, and perhaps much worse. If our efforts are not crowned with immediate success, there is no reason for despair. Look at the farmer! He buries the seed in the soil and for months sees no sign of growth. But hope tells him that the coming spring will lure from the bosom of the earth a rich harvest. Why should we expect that the seeds of moral, religious or civic endeavor should sprout into instantaneous fruition? "Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days."

"Never yet a spoken word
But in echo it was heard;
Never was a living thought,
But some magic it has wrought.
And no deed was ever done
That has died from under sun."

Would you be successful in life, would you become eminent in any calling or pursuit, would you be useful to your fellowmen, would you perform your duty to God and to your neighbor? You can accomplish none of these without first learning the lesson of hopefulness.

Despair is both a sin and a punishment, while hopefulness is both a religious duty and a blessing. When we grow despondent we show our mistrust in God and in His loving kindness. Thus it comes that the truly religious man is hopeful, cheerful and optimistic. I am well aware that there are many so-called religious people to whom merriment and cheer smack of folly and of wickedness. But these straight-laced and sour-faced children of darkness are very far from a true conception of religion. While I cannot speak authoritatively of other creeds, I can state of Judaism that it is a religion of hope. Israel's gospel is a gospel of joy. In the very first chapter of the Bible we read: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." (Genesis I, 31.) "Serve the Lord with joy." (Psalm C, 2) is the spirit of the Scriptures. Numerous are the occasions on which the Israelite is commanded to rejoice. He is enjoined to rejoice in his festivals and to call the Sabbath a delight. Hopefulness pervades the utterances of the prophets. Looking around them and observing idolatry and bloodshed, they did not despair of the final redemption of the human race and saw the beautiful vision of a golden age of peace and of universal enlightenment in the far-off future. When the enemies were mighty over Israel the prophet proclaimed the message of hope in the beautiful words: "In the future shall Jacob yet take

root, Israel shall bud and blossom, and shall fill the face of the world with fruit." (Isaiah XXVII, 6.)

The sages counted cheer and hope among the noble virtues and despondency among the worst of vices. "The Shechinah" (divine presence), says the Talmud, "does not rest upon a man who is in a state of abject gloom, or who is idle or frivolous, but upon him who is joyous in consequence of duty performed."

It was fortunate for our forefathers that they absorbed this joyous doctrine of hopefulness. It gave them courage to endure sufferings which otherwise might have annihilated them. Hope cheered their miserable lives and pointed to better days. Hope lighted up the Ghetto when reality was dark and dreary. Hope inspired faith in the coming of the Messiah and in the Messianic era, when liberty and equality shall bind all men into one brotherhood.

It is well that Israel of to-day still hopes. All chains are not yet broken. Tyranny is still raising aloft its hideous head. Many of our brethren are still laboring under oppressive laws and amidst hostile surroundings. The twentieth century has not fulfilled its promise. But hope still abides with us. To some it whispers of a New Zion and of a regenerated people on the ancient soil of Israel; to others it tells of an enlightened humanity that is to be which will embrace lovingly the outcast, Israel. But whether salvation comes from the East or from the West we feel that come it must.

And so let us learn the lesson of hope. When we have mastered it thoroughly we will know better how to grapple with obstacles and to make defeats stepping-stones to victories. We will then cheerfully and serenely toil for beloved ones, for fellowmen and for country irrespective of recognition, gratitude or glory. We shall then have a sure antidote against care that causes premature wrinkles and against fretting and chafing concerning the daily buffetings to which Dame Fortune pleases to subject us. We will not shed fruitless tears for mishaps that come or misfortunes that might come, for we shall hope in God.

AMEN.

*THE BLESSINGS OF RELIGION.

TEXT:—"Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit saith the Lord of hosts."—(Zechariah IV, 6.)

IT must be admitted that this is not a religious age. It is an epoch of steam and electricity, of scientific research, of inventions and of industrial and commercial combinations. This unprecedented material progress has in a measure overshadowed the spiritual elements of life. Man has become skeptical, self-sufficient, arrogant, materialistic, craving for pleasure and for wealth. A shallow rationalism has taken hold of the masses not thorough enough to deserve the name of true culture, but sufficient to make them irreverent scoffers and skeptics. It is quite a common thing nowadays to hear men of very little education speak lightly of religion and to condemn it with one sweeping statement as so much superstition or hypocrisy.

Would those, whom a little knowledge changed into scoffers, delve more deeply into the mine of wisdom, they would speak more respectfully of Religion, the institution which brings man nearer to God. Well has Francis Bacon said that "a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." Few of the really great thinkers have denied the existence of a Supreme Being. A few days ago the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer, closed his brilliant career. He is considered the apostle of agnosticism and many of the superficial readers of his profound works were influenced by them to have a contempt for religion. And yet even Spencer says that "the truly religious element of religion has always been good; that which has proved untenable in doctrine and vicious in practice has been its irreligious element." The prophets of atheism that abounded in the time of Voltaire and Paine have proven false prophets, for their doctrine failed to satisfy the yearnings of man. The philosophers and scientists of this age, if they are not identified with the Church, yet exhibit a sympathy for religion and admit that it has been the most powerful factor in the progress of humanity.

* Preached on the eve of Sabbath Chanuccah 5664.

Such writers and thinkers as John Ruskin and John Fiske speak of religion with great reverence. The latter in his excellent book, "The Idea of God," says "The Deity is knowable as the Power which is disclosed in every throb of the mighty rhythmic life of the universe; knowable as the eternal source of a moral law which is implicated with each action of our lives, and in obedience to which lies our only guaranty of the happiness which is incorruptible, and which neither inevitable misfortune nor unmerited obloquy can take away."

As we study nature and its marvelous laws we are utterly unable to find a satisfactory explanation of the things about us unless we turn to religion for an answer. Seeing the wonderful regularity and adaptation in the life and growth of the numberless organisms in this world, seeing how everything in nature's household has its place and purpose, we must come to a conclusion that there is a Providence that rules and governs all things as well as a Power that brought them into existence. Like the Psalmist of old, the modern student of nature "when he considers the heavens, the moon and the stars" and the infinite worlds revolving in everlasting harmony must be moved on the one hand to a sense of humility and exclaim: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" And on the other hand, recognizing that "the events of the Universe cannot be the work of chance, neither the outcome of blind necessity," but "that this vast machinery and enginery of earth and heaven must be the products of infinite power in which infinite wisdom lies hidden," he is impelled to fall on his knees and worship: "O Lord our God how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

Indeed, religion is the only key that can solve the puzzle of existence. In spite of the great progress that science has been making it cannot throw any light upon the origin and destiny of man. Philosophy can never answer the burning questions: "Whence comest thou? and whither dost thou go?" But the religious man humbly answers: "I am a child of God; put here for character building by my heavenly Father and I hope through my good deeds to earn for myself eternal life in Heaven!" Had religion accomplished nothing else than to have thus invested existence with a *raison d'etre* and human life with purpose and dignity, it would be the greatest boon that has ever been granted to man.

But religion is more than a philosophy. It is a force which tends to make man better and happier. In considering this aspect of religion we are no longer concerned with abstract speculation, but with concrete, historical facts. Not all men are given to philosophical speculation. There are people whom the "why?" and "wherefore?" of things do not interest. They go through life without ever bestowing thought on the purpose and destiny of existence. They are intensely practical and focus all their energies upon the bread-and-butter affairs of life, besides which all else sinks into insignificance. For the sake of these matter-of-fact children of the twentieth century let us look at religion from a practical, I am almost tempted to say, from a utilitarian standpoint. Is there any one so "practical" as not to appreciate the blessings of liberty? Yet it is a fact admitted by all that this fair flower of humanity without which life is worse than death, has grown in the garden of religion. The Decalogue declares God as the God of liberty: "I am the Lord thy God who has brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." It is the Bible which contains that golden text of freedom: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." It is the religion of Israel that dictated festivals such as "Chanuccah" to celebrate the victories of a people fighting for liberty.

Again, is there any one so matter-of-fact as to undervalue the virtue of honesty? Without this virtue civilization could not last and governments would soon dissolve in anarchy. Yet it is religion more than any other power that teaches men the sacredness of property and impresses the would-be offender with the heinousness of the crime of stealing and robbing. In countries where the Bible is unknown and where paganism rules supreme the vice of dishonesty is so widespread that it clogs the wheels of progress. I read that some years ago, after the Shah of Persia had visited Europe, on coming home to his native land he undertook to inaugurate a postoffice system there. But the fundamental conditions of honesty were wanting, and he was obliged to abandon the effort. If we have the ideas of integrity, of uprightness and of justice engraved in our being, let us remember that it was the finger of God that inscribed them upon the tablets of our hearts, and that our morality is a result of centuries of training under the ennobling influences of the Bible and the Religion of the Bible.

Nor is religion satisfied with mere honesty. It teaches brotherly love, kindness, charity and helpfulness. It says, it is not sufficient that you do not dishonestly appropriate what belongs to your neighbor, it is your duty to help him when he is in distress, to uplift him when he has stumbled, to feed him when he is hungry, to clothe him when he is naked, to console him when he is sad, to encourage him when he is in despair. Religion says, all men are brothers, children of one Heavenly Father; it behooves them to dwell together in peace and love and mutual sympathy; it is their duty to make humanity one loving family where strife and war, bloodshed and enmity shall be unknown, and where goodwill and harmony shall rule supreme. "Beautiful ideal!" you say, "but has it ever been realized?" Certainly not; but because human brotherhood has not yet been realized there is even more reason to hold aloft the banner whose motto is, "The Fatherhood of Good and the Brotherhood of Man"; because man is still deficient, cruel, uncharitable, blood-thirsty and warlike, we must continue to cherish that mighty influence that has in the past contributed more than any other factor to the elevation of man from savagery and brutality. For it cannot be denied that man has advanced in peacefulness, in righteousness and in charity. Compare the average man of to-day with the average man of antiquity, as far as we can get a knowledge of him by the help of history, and you will be astonished how the ancient savage who lived by his sword has developed into the refined and law-abiding gentleman of to-day. Now, I claim, and with me are not only the exponents of all religious denominations in the civilized world but also its scientists and historians, that the most important element in the upliftment of humanity to its present degree of culture has been the religious element and particularly those religions that drew their inspiration and their ideas of ethics from Israel's Bible.

A glance at those countries where men are still plunged in the abyss of heathenism, revealing to us a horrible condition of selfishness, of sensuality, of ignorance, and of immorality, makes it as plain as any truth can possibly be demonstrated that all our civilization, our culture, our refinement, our education, our ideas of government, of charity and of justice have come to us from the great fountain-head of all human progress—Religion. And does it not follow that, if we wish to preserve, to develop and to increase these priceless blessings for ourselves and for our children, we must see to it that the fountain whence they sprang

be not sealed up by the stones that the skeptics and the scoffers ungratefully cast into it?

Israel, in particular, ought to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors and be faithful to their mission of proclaiming godliness and goodness among the children of men. Religion is the peculiar heritage of the Jewish people. While we do not attempt to monopolize this blessing and are gladly willing to share it with the rest of humanity, still it is but stating a fact, that if not for Israel, the religious and moral strivings of the world could have never attained to their present state. Faith, devotion, holiness and purity are the precious gifts of Israel to the treasure-house of humanity. The few earnest men that thousands of years ago amidst the hills of Judea dreamed and hoped and yearned for an enlightened and righteous humanity have had more influence upon mankind's moral development than all the other teachers and moralists of the human race combined. Whoever reads history aright must confess that "out of Zion came forth the Law and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem."

The historical associations that cluster about the beautiful Festival of Chanuccah that we now celebrate prove this assertion most strikingly. About twenty-one hundred years ago the tyrannical king of a mighty heathen empire, Antiochus Epiphanes, of Syria, resolved to exterminate the Jews and to eradicate Judaism from their hearts. Thanks to the fidelity of the Chassidim and to the bravery of the Maccabean family, his plans were frustrated and the defiled Temple of God was resanctified to the worship of the Most High. Had Antiochus been successful, had the idolatrous worship of Jupiter displaced the worship of the God of Israel, had the sensuous and immoral rites of paganism taken the place of the pure and exalted service of Judaism, had Olympus become mankind's source of salvation instead of Sinai, had Greek immorality and skepticism been bequeathed to us instead of the faith, the purity and the righteousness of the Prophets of Judea, who can conceive in what direction mankind would have developed; who can tell what aspect civilization would have taken, or whether civilization would have existed at all?

It is proper that we keep alive the memory of our brave forefathers and celebrate their heroism, their courage, their faith and their martyrdom; it is well that we kindle these lights that symbolize the victory of enlightenment over bigotry, the triumph of true religion over idolatry, the ascendancy of religious freedom over the slavery of the mind and of the conscience. By doing

so we learn to what heights of unselfish endeavor, of moral courage and of heroic achievement man can rise when impelled by the mighty power of religion. Such heroes as Mattathias, Judas Maccabeus and Eliezer, and such heroine as Hannah are the most convincing proofs of the beneficent influence that religion has over the lives of men and women. It makes them superior to conditions, it causes them to defy the tortures of tyranny, to have contempt for suffering and for death; it invests them with superhuman endurance and courage, and with those sterling virtues of soul and character that humanity always admired and ever will cherish. Religion needs no stronger argument to advance than to point to the fact that the noblest types of humanity were those who were inspired by the spirit of God, "the infinite Power that makes for righteousness."

Why, then, my friends, should we deliberately cast away our sacred heritage bequeathed to us by our great forefathers, by allowing our religious consciousness to slumber and to decay, and by neglecting to uphold those principles for which our ancestors lived, fought and died? When I see the irreligion that is rampant among my brethren, the irreverence for sacred things and institutions, the utter disregard of the precepts of the Law, the indifference for and ignorance of our glorious history and literature, I am tempted to apply to them the harsh but true words of Moses: "They are a very froward generation, children in whom there is no faith!" (Deuteronomy XXXII, 20.)

It is time that Israel awake to a sense of duty. Chanuccah, with its sublime reminiscences of an age when fidelity to God's Law was dearer to the Jew than life itself, ought to rekindle the flame of religion in our hearts. The glorious deeds of the Maccabees ought to fill every son and daughter of Israel with pride, not the pride that vaunts and boasts, but that noble pride, that self-respect and sense of honor which is a shield against degrading sin and besmirching vice, the pride that induces men to think highly and act nobly in order not to disgrace the name which the deeds of former generations made lustrous in the annals of men. Such pride is a virtue and should be fostered in the hearts of the young. It will give them that self-respect which is essential to true manhood and womanhood. Let this festival, finally, teach us the lesson that spirituality is the soul of progress and that if Israel would be progressive and stand on the heights of culture and civilization, his first and last care should be to cling to the religion of his fathers, the religion that bestowed upon mankind

its most precious blessings, the religion that is yet destined to realize man's fondest hopes and most exalted ideals, the religion that will yet bring about a stage of civilization when human sympathy shall be all in all and the spirit of God shall rule supreme.

AMEN.

WORK—A DUTY AND A BLESSING.

TEXT:—"Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening."—(Psalm CIV, 23.)

The following legend is related by our sages: When Adam heard the Holy One (blessed be His name) pronounce the awful sentence: "Cursed be the ground for thy sake. . . . And thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the field," he began to weep bitterly and said, "O Sovereign of the world! Am I doomed to eat with my beast of burden out of the same crib?" But when God further said: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," Adam was at once comforted and cheered. (Pesachim 118a.)

In this piece of ancient lore a most useful lesson is taught which, when universally accepted, would solve many a problem that is now vexing humanity. We are shown here that labor has been ordained by the Creator as man's destiny, that toiling and tilling at first conceived by Adam as a curse, proved to be one of the greatest boons which God bestowed upon man. This truth which the Rabbis of old represent as having been proclaimed over the very cradle of humanity is far from being understood and acknowledged even now by the human family. We speak of work as of a dire necessity. We say, man *must* work or else he would perish of hunger and of exposure. By their dissatisfied miens and cheerless countenances some people seem to show that they consider labor as a necessary evil. We hear people complain of the burdens that the struggle for existence imposes upon them, of the incessant toil which the taskmaster Necessity demands of them. Like bondmen, driven to their daily tasks by the whip of imperious Want, some labor with heavy hearts, hoping all the while for some streak of luck by which they might be liberated from this slavery and enter the happy leisured class. Some dream of a Utopia where labor and toil are unknown, where the joys and comforts of life come to all without any effort or exertion, and where the divine sentence "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is changed to read "In ease and tranquillity shalt thou enjoy all that thy heart desires!"

This view of labor is pernicious and productive of evil and a great deal of unhappiness. It causes the laboring class to be dissatisfied with their lot and to envy the idle rich. It changes the workman from a self-respecting and contented man into a rebellious and grumbling drudge. It promotes strikes and is the chief cause of the troubles that now exist between capital and labor. Why is it that labor is sullen and discontented? Why is it that the social system is being threatened with collapse by reason of the continual strife between the men of muscle and the men of money? Why has the cheer and the mirth that formerly characterized artisans given way to gloom and despair? Because a dangerous and false doctrine has been preached by the exponents of socialism and the leaders of labor, according to which work is a curse—an evil and an abnormal condition of man. If labor is an irksome task then, of course, it must be reduced to a minimum, and men should try to free themselves from its yoke. If labor is a calamity, then the laborer may justly deem himself the victim of the idle capitalist under whose heel he groans. We can readily see how such doctrine when spread among the unthinking masses must cause discontent, envy and misery.

But there are other ways in which this unjust view of labor has a mischievous effect upon society. A young man starts upon a career. He yearns to be successful, to earn wealth and fame. To accomplish this he knows he must put his shoulders to the wheel and exert all his powers in a certain line of activity. Whether it be a trade, a profession or some mercantile pursuit which he undertakes, he soon learns that success is the reward of labor. However, his eye is directed chiefly upon the reward, while the effort which must precede it is looked upon as an unpleasant necessity. He longs for success, but would fain reach it by some flowery path of ease and leisure. He does not love the work for its own sake, but merely as a means to an end. What is the result? Neglecting to put his soul and his affection into his occupation his efforts are vain, and either he ends in failure or, which is by far worse, he goes astray in the forbidden bypaths that promise a harvest without toil; thinking that shrewdness will compensate for honest work, he wakes up one day and finds disgrace added to failure.

This view of labor which, as we attempted to show, is productive of evil and misery, is decidedly against Scripture and against the teachings of Israel's sages. When man was placed into the Garden of Eden, he was commanded to till it and to

guard it, from which we can learn that happiness is impossible without exertion and work. In the Book of Psalms we read, "When thou eatest the labor of thy hands then wilt thou be happy, and it shall be well with thee." (Psalm CXXVIII, 2.) "Sweet is the sleep of the laboring man" is another beautiful sentence found in the Bible. (Ecclesiastes V, 11.) "Seest thou a man diligent in his work? He shall stand before Kings." (Proverbs XXII, 29), says the royal philosopher of Israel. Thus we see that Scripture characterizes work as a blessing and as a moral duty. The Talmud is even more pronounced in its glorification of labor. "Greatly esteemed is labor, for it ennobles the workman" (Nedarim 49b) is one of the Talmudic sayings. "To live by toil is of greater worth than idle piety (Berachoth 8a)—a lesson to those who in their eagerness for spiritual attainment neglect the fundamental duty of work. "Love toil and hate dominion" is the wholesome advice of the sages. (Aboth I, 10.) "Man should love work because it is a part of the divine covenant as expressed in the Decalogue: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." "God caused not His Shechinah to rest in Israel till they merited it by their labor in building the tabernacle." (Aboth of R. Nathan.) Nor did our teachers make any distinction between one pursuit and another; all are honorable as long as they are honest.

"O strip a carcass in the street
And take your pay for labor sweet,
And say not, 'I am a priest or king,
And 'neath my honor's such a thing!' "
(Baba Bathra 110a, Rev. Isidore Myer's translation.)

Many of the Rabbis taught this high regard for labor not only by precept, but also by example. Many of them divided their time between the study of the Law and the earnest pursuit of some humble trade. Thus we read that Hillel at one period of his life was an ordinary day-laborer, Rabbi Akiba a wood-carrier, Rabbi Joshua a smith, Rabbi Joseph a miller, Rabbi Sheshet a carpenter, and Rabbi Johannan was proud of his name "the Shoemaker." In later times, too, some of the greatest men in Israel supported themselves by arduous labor. Menasseh Ben Israel was a printer, Baruch Spinza a lensemaker, and Moses Mendelssohn a bookkeeper.

The fact that labor is a divine law is in itself a proof of its beneficent purpose, for we believe God is loving and merciful and He would not subject His creatures to a perpetual state of

misery. Knowing that it is God's will that we live not a life of indolence and leisure, but one of activity and service, we ought not to look upon labor as an unpleasant task which we would, if we could, avoid and shirk, but as a welcome employment suitable to our nature and conducive to our well-being. Experience confirms our *a priori* reasoning in this matter. Toil is productive of health of body and of soul. You remember the beautiful lines of Longfellow:

> "The smith, a mighty man is he,
> With large and sinewy hands;
> And the muscles of his brawny arms
> Are strong as iron bands."

Activity makes people strong, healthy and happy. One of the great blessings that God granted to man is that within certain limits the more he does the more he is capable of doing. The most cheerful people are those who are always occupied in some useful employment; while the indolent and idle are always in a morose state of mind and in a torpid condition of body. Let us not envy the lot of those who have nothing to do. They know not the sweet rest, the refreshing sleep, the vigorous health that is the share of the toilers. Time is heavy upon their heads, and the round of continuous amusements with which they spend the day soon fails to satisfy their cravings. They try to kill time, but eventually time kills them. There is no worse torture than that of *ennui*. Can you imagine the miseries of a man who, rising in the morning, can look forward to no task or purpose but that of satisfying his animal appetites? Is he not far inferior to the servant that attends to his needs—nay, to his horse, that bears him on his pleasure haunts? All the forces of nature condemn the idle man. The rushing brook, the rustling leaves, the budding flowers, the driving clouds, the chirping birds—all seem to mock him and to urge him: "Do something! live for something! He who does not work has no right to live!"

Morally, too, labor has a beneficent mission. Busy people have no time to indulge in evil thoughts or in evil deeds. Idleness is the mother of crime. "The Devil tempts the idle man" is a Turkish proverb. "*Ennui*," says a writer, "has made more gamblers than avarice, more drunkards than thirst, and perhaps as many suicides as despair." If you would drive one to a life of sin and evil give him a chance to be idle. Would you have your children moral, virtuous and upright? Teach them, first of all, the lessons of industry and diligence.

Having, as I hope, established the fact that work is a divine duty, a law of nature, and a source of blessing and of moral improvement to man, I must nevertheless admit that there is labor which is neither a pleasure nor a blessing. We know that many groan under the burden of toil. Why is this? There is such a thing as excess in labor, and work can be abused as well as any other blessing. Our forefathers in Egypt cried to God because of the heavy labor which the tyrant imposed upon them. To-day, too, some are in such soul-killing bondage. Far be it from me to condemn all complaining workmen as indolent. There are unfavorable conditions which render toil almost unbearable. There are employers that oppress their employees and take advantage of the helpless poverty of those who live by their handiwork. Some employers treat the workmen with contempt and cruelty. They demand the most labor for the least wages, and fail to recompense honest toil by its deserving reward. The economic slavery under which he suffers does not conduce to the happiness and the welfare of the unfortunate drudge. These conditions are artificial and not ordained by God. The divine law requires that the laborer be duly and fully paid for his labor; that he be treated with respect and kindness. Both employer and employee must be impressed with the truth that labor is a divine law, and that each must treat the other not as an enemy, but as a confederate in the fulfilment of man's destiny. Let the workman put his love and his affection into his work and let the employer honor the laborer who does his duty with fidelity and industry.

One more point we should notice on this subject. While it is our duty to work, we must see to it that we work for a noble purpose. Let us not devote all our energies to the accumulation of worldly treasures which do not satisfy the heart and the soul. Our labor must have a higher motive than the selfish and sordid purpose of those who toil only to heap up wealth or struggle for the fading laurels of honor. Let us endeavor to do something for truth, for righteousness, for the cause of God and the good of our fellowmen. Then our toil will have an everlasting reward. Let us work for the elevation and improvement of our character. Let us never cease to clear the weeds of sin and of passion from the garden of our soul and cultivate in it the flowers of virtue and of goodness. To stand still means retrogression and degeneration. We must increase our knowledge,

strengthen our power of self-control, and steel our capacity to withstand temptation.

Let us work to advance the welfare of our neighbors. There is no more blessed occupation in the wide realm of human activity than to ameliorate the pangs and pains of our suffering fellow-men. What a glorious privilege is it to be enabled to help those who cannot help themselves! What an exquisite delight to feel that some one is relieved because of our assistance, that some one blesses us for our benevolence. It is a most blissful consciousness to know that we do not live in vain, that the world is better and happier because of our little share of uplifting work. If God has endowed you with faculties, use them for the benefit of those not so endowed; if your portion is a blessed one, share it with the poor and the needy.

And finally, let us work for our religion. There are those who think that religion is a sentiment, not a duty; who believe in a comfortable and easy-going faith which imposes no burdens and exacts no obligations. Let me assure you that there is no flowery path to heaven. If our religion is worth anything at all it is worth our best efforts and most earnest labors. Religion means service. Passive sentiments do not go far unless they be springs for action. "Seek the Lord,"—that is the prophet's appeal. We must worship Him, keep His commandments and bring sacrifices upon His holy altar. We owe loyalty, fidelity and obedience to our God. We have obligations to our religion and to our co-religionists. We should help others to walk on the path of duty and righteousness. Particularly should we exert our energy to initiate our children in the fear of God and inspire them with love for His holy law. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," is the divine command.

All these duties should be performed by us not as burdensome tasks, but as delightful service. "Serve the Lord with joy." Pervaded by the truth that service is the law of life, that labor is the duty and privilege of man, that there is no more brilliant diadem than the "crown of service," let us do our duty in whatever sphere God has placed us with energy, with love and with a joyous heart. Let us ever remember the words of Goethe:

"Rest not, life is sweeping by;
Go and dare before you die—
Something mighty and sublime
Leave behind to conquer time."—AMEN.

REST.

TEXT:—"For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity."—(Ecclesiastes II, 22, 23.)

EVERY blessing can be turned into a curse by abuse. Work which we described in our last week's lecture as a boon has frequently been changed by man's folly into a bane. When work is carried to excess it becomes drudgery, which is of benefit neither to the body nor to the soul. Why is slavery acknowledged by all civilized men to be an evil? Because under its system the toiler is degraded to a beast of burden by over-work. Whether such servitude is exacted by a taskmaster with a whip in his hand or by man's own insatiable avarice, it is productive of the same bad results. Human nature is so constituted that no effort can be continued for a long while without rest. Rest is essential to our welfare. When you observe the operations of nature, that eternal textbook of humanity, you will see that the lesson of rest is taught as plainly as the lesson of activity. The alternation of day and night is an indication that toil must be followed by beneficent repose. The seasons of the year, too, proclaim the same law. In winter nature is at rest; under the blanket of snow and frost seed and bud sleep their long night, gathering strength for the re-awakening of spring. The ocean has its floods and tides, its storms and calms. The atmosphere also is sometimes stirred by tempestuous winds; at other times lulled to rest by gentle zephyrs.

If man would turn an attentive ear to these hints of nature and wisely divide his time between labor and rest, he would attain to more happiness than is the average share of mortals. We are sorely in need of the lesson of rest—perhaps more so than of the lesson of work. The besetting sin of this age is not so much indolence as over-work. It is an age of hustling and striving, of hurry and bustle. Especially are we Americans guilty in this respect. A distinguished foreigner once remarked that when the American travels he races. He can be recognized by his careworn look, his jostling ways, and by the air of business that always sur-

rounds him. Even while abroad for amusement he tries to "take in" as much sight-seeing as possible within the shortest period of time. The habit of being in haste has become his second nature and accompanies him wherever he goes. It may be that the greatness, the progressiveness, and the prosperity of this country are due to this our national characteristic. Look at our gigantic enterprises, at our commerce, at our industries, at our inventions! They are the wonder and envy of the world. Although the youngest nation, America is one of the leading powers and the foremost in wealth and commerce. This greatness, no doubt, is partially the result of the aggressive, the restless, and the wide-awake spirit of our people, which stops at no obstacle and knows no barriers in its rapid course of progress.

But it is to be feared that this very virtue of the American will eventually bring suffering and ruin upon him. It has been truly said that the American works himself to death. Physically, mentally and morally he is bound to deteriorate because of this inordinate strenuosity. There are probably more people suffering from all kinds of nervous diseases in this country than anywhere else on the face of the globe. The American lives, works, eats, sleeps and dies in a hurry. While yet in middle age he looks haggard and worn out; his hair becomes gray, his eyes dim prematurely. His sins against the laws of nature are visited upon his innocent children. They inherit a predisposition to nervousness and start in life with the terrible disadvantage of a weak and frail constitution. This is a serious menace to the future of this Republic. Rome sank from the highest pinnacle of power to ruin and destruction because of the degeneracy and effeminacy of her people. Those whom she designated as barbarians, possessed of sturdier strength and hardier manhood, wrested the sceptre from her hands. Let America take the warning and benefit by the lesson that history imparts. We must curb our ambitions and allow ourselves more rest, more repose, more recreation, more change from this constant slavery in the treadmill of money-making. Let us take time to live and then we will live happier and longer.

This failing of the American can likewise be laid at the door of the Jew. Ages of persecution have sharpened his intellect. For centuries he has had no rest. Like a wild beast he was hunted by his enemies and driven from place to place. His means of livelihood have been curtailed by special and oppressive laws, so that he had to live by his wits. This developed in him a marvelous capacity for endurance and for intellectual labor.

He was constrained to learn how to make the best of the most adverse conditions. In mercantile pursuits he is recognized to be a genius. Give him freedom and opportunity and in ten years the Jewish immigrant starting almost penniless will have a flourishing business. In their industry and inventiveness the Jew and the Yankee are alike. Both have the push, the energy and the ambition required to achieve success. Indeed they worship success. However, both have this vulnerable point: they are restless and discontented. Prosperity goads them to greater exertions. They are both victims of over-work, of a self-imposed slavery from which none but death ever succeeds in liberating them.

My friends, I am addressing a congregation that is both Jewish and American, to which, therefore, this message of warning against abusing the faculties of body and of soul by excessive and unremitting labor ought to come home with double force. Far be it from me to encourage idleness. Everyone must and should work. It is our destiny, ordained by God and by nature. But many of us make a terrible mistake inasmuch as we sacrifice the end for the means. We must remember that, as Spencer once said, "life is not for work, but work is for life." In our devotion to work many of us forget to live. In this dreadful thraldom of Mammon we have lost the mastery over self. In our eager pursuit of the things that make life joyous and happy we destroy our capacity of enjoying the very objects we strive for.

What is the cause of this terrible malady which has befallen this age? Why did our forefathers have plenty of time and for us even steam and electricity are becoming too slow? Why were our ancestors able to enjoy rests and holidays and lived a happy and contented life, while we consume our energies with a feverish haste that is constantly becoming more and more rapid? I imagine many of you are ready with an answer. "Competition is greater than it ever was." This is certainly true. While competition always did exist, and to some extent it is natural and useful, it never existed in such fierce form as to-day. The struggle for existence is intense. Without mercy and without sympathy each pushes ahead as if for dear life. No matter who is trampled under foot, no matter who falls disabled by the wayside, the soldier of fortune marches on and on with one aim in view: to win the battle of life! The strong has no consideration for the weak. It used to be proverbial that "everything is fair in love and war." Now there is a silent understanding that

everything is fair in business. The moral standard of mercantile life is, to express it mildly, very primitive. It advanced but little since those early days when our savage progenitors, with club in hand, had to fight with man and beast for sustenance. The struggle has become more refined and more subtle and complex, but not a bit less cruel and determined. However, competition is only a description of the existing conditions—it does not account for them. Why is competition fiercer to-day than it ever was?

I believe the true reason of our excessive toiling in the service of the Almighty Dollar is to be found in the fact that we have wandered away from the simplicity of life that characterized former times. Luxury is the Moloch in whose worship we consume our lives. We have become ostentatious and artificial. Things that would have made our fathers happy and thankful fail to satisfy us. This applies to our homes, to our dress and to our mode of living. Men and women of a generation or two ago were satisfied to live in humble homes and enjoy modestly and heartily whatever their honest toil brought them. We scorn to live like that to-day. We must have a splendid home in a fashionable district, filled with precious objects that far surpass our means. Our taste for rich dresses has developed remarkably—in fact, far beyond what the average man's income warrants. What formerly would have been considered a luxury in our times has become a necessity. Extravagance, showiness and devotion to Dame Fashion's cult have complete sway over us. It pervades all classes of society, the difference being merely in degree. The rich give the example and the poor follow closely after them. People certainly may have beautiful homes and fine dresses—if they can afford it. But to be a miserable slave, to work and toil like a drudge, to have neither Sabbath nor holidays in the constant grind for money merely to live up to a certain standard which a heartless and soulless society demands, is sheer folly. To deprive yourself of all rest and recreation, of all leisure in which to recuperate the body and to refresh the soul simply because your daughter must indulge in extravagant dressing like her rich neighbor, is as unjust as it is absurd. To rack your brains, to ruin your nerves, to undermine your health, and to shorten your life in order to be counted among the members of a certain favored coterie is madness that borders on the criminal.

Many people live beyond their means—this is the chief reason of the heartless and senseless hustling and striving exhibited in our age. This is the reason why men work harder today than they ever did in the past, why they grow old and gray prematurely, why they begrudge themselves those sweet hours of repose that are necessary to make life happy and work a pleasure. This is the cause of the prevalence of diseases that are ascribed to over-work and lack of leisure and recreation. This is the cause of the materialism, of the lack of religion and virtue, and of the absence of spirituality which characterizes this age. Because men live beyond their means they have to work beyond their powers and to disregard the law of God and the law of nature and of common-sense which demand that work and rest be properly proportioned. Let us cease to worship Dame Fashion, let us refuse to indulge in luxuries which our means do not justify, and we will be freed from the curse of over-work. Let us return to nature, live in accordance with its dictates, a simple life free from luxury and extravagance, and we will be able to rest and to look hopefully and joyously into the future.

In Scotland there is a hill called Glen Croe. When the weary traveler reaches the summit he sees a large stone formed like a bench upon which there is engraved the motto "Rest and be thankful." Oh, while ascending wearily the hill of life, we would incline our ears to the beneficent and kindly advice "Rest and be thankful!" Oh that we grant ourselves some respite from his soul-killing bondage which our insatiable avarice imposes upon us! Oh, that we would stop now and then in the mad scramble for wealth and be contented to enjoy modestly and moderately the fruits of our labors! Remember, O ye that are driven by ambition and covetousness, that life is short, that if you do not allow yourselves rest the eternal repose of the grave will soon come. What will then all your wealth avail you?

Let us learn the lesson of rest. In the creation story of Genesis the sanctification of the Day of Rest precedes the command "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." In the Decalogue labor and rest are enjoined in the same commandment: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is Sabbath in honor of the Lord thy God." Many of us obey the first part of this commandment and neglect the second. We ignore the divinely instituted day of rest and crowd into its sacred space the labor and the toil of the weekdays, thus breaking God's command and undermining our own happiness.

Never was Sabbath-breaking as common and as flagrant as it is to-day in American Israel. The day of rest is violated by men and by women, by young and old alike. Not only do we thereby neglect a fundamental principle of Judaism and shake the foundations of our faith, but we sin against the dictates of reason and sink into the worst form of slavery. Can you consider him a free man whose business holds such mastery over him that it will not allow him one day out of seven for rest and recuperation? Can you call him free whose love for money is so strong that it stifles every noble instinct and every higher aspiration? All those whose passion for wealth prevents them from listening to the voice of reason and from obeying the divine command to hallow the Sabbath belong to the category of slaves. O, where is the Moses that would free this generation from the slavery of materialism?

I firmly believe that a return to the faithful observance of the Sabbath is the only salvation from the destructive thraldom which holds so many of us in its clutches. Such observance will increase our vitality and augment our physical powers. It will furthermore have a beneficial effect upon our intellectual development. To those who labor with their muscles the day of rest ought to bring the welcome change of intellectual relaxation. It should be used for reading useful and instructive books whereby the toilers may increase their knowledge and widen their mental horizon. To those who labor with brains the Sabbath should bring a change of mental occupation, devoting it to lines of thought different from those which their daily occupations demand. The business man should put aside his ledger, the lawyer his legal books, the physician his medical books and fill their minds and hearts with new themes and thoughts. This change of mental occupation will brace up the mind even as a change of air refreshes the body.

Finally, the Sabbath will improve our spiritual condition. It will turn our attention from the worldly affairs in which we are absorbed throughout the week to the higher aspirations of humanity. It will lift us from the lowly valley of temporal interests to the exalted heights where we come face to face with the eternal verities of life. In the quiet repose of the Sabbath-rest, freed from the distracting hurry and bustle of business, we will bestow thought upon the true relation of man to God and to the world. Our vision will grow clearer when the mist of worldliness is dispelled. We will lift our eyes heavenward and

Godward, and our little lives with their little ambitions and strivings will assume a new aspect. We will say with Koheleth: "For what hath man of all his labour and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?" We will recognize that this life is but an ante-chamber before a more glorious life in the realms of Eternity. This knowledge will change our motives and purposes. We will no longer be helpless slaves of passing whims and passions, but intelligent and free men and women, with sufficient insight to know that accumulation of wealth is not the chief aim of man. We will then acquire the spirit of worship, the spirit of religion, the spirit of God.—AMEN.

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